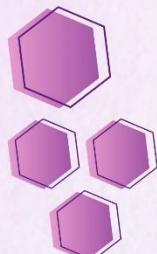
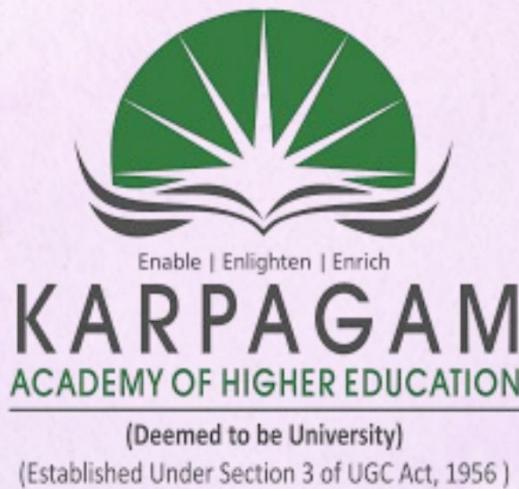
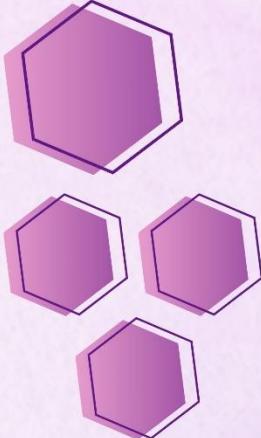


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## Department of English

*presents*

### Crossing Borders: Exploring the Diversities of English Language & Literature



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**Faculty of Arts, Science, Commerce and Management**  
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## Conflicts and Shackles Faced by Transgenders in the Society

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### Abstract:

Mahesh Dattani, a multifarious artist of contemporary Indian English drama, is a director, actor, dancer, teacher and writer all rolled into one. This proposed paper aims at Dattani's ideas and concerns of transgender in *Seven Steps around the Fire* in order to accept transgender as a human being in the society. Transgender is considered as neither male nor female in the society; rather they are looked down upon and are marginalized and curbed. The society fails to offer equal rights to them. It makes them feel inferior to the other fellow beings in the society mainly because of the sex disparity.

In the play, Kamala who is a transgender, gets married to a politically, culturally, economically wealthy man named Subbu. Subbu's father who is disgusted by the act of their marriage kills Kamala as he thinks that his son shouldn't have married a transgender. In the great epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata transgender is considered equal to others in their courage and valor. Likewise, Dattani also compares these transgenders to saints as in Ramayana and reveals his views through his effective writing in his play *Seven Steps around the Fire*. The proposed paper will concentrate on changing the views about transgender in order to accept transgender as human beings and to be recognized by the society.

Mahesh Dattani is a man of drama with intelligence. Most of his plays are related to the Indian middle-class family. He shows gender issues, problems of transgender community and place of women in Indian society. Dattani concentrates on contemporary society and reality in the fast-changing globe. He's a playwright on modern urban India and his plays are topical dramas. The question he addresses in his plays is those of gender, sex, religion, communal tension, feminine identity, same sex marriage and above all gay and lesbian relationship but *Seven Steps around the Fire* concentrates on identity crisis of transgender, male chauvinists and gender bias problems. Transgender is considered as neither male nor female in the society; rather they are looked down upon and are marginalized and curbed. The society fails to offer equal rights to them. It makes them feel inferior to the other fellow beings in the society mainly because of the sex disparity.

Mahesh Dattani's plays often feature characters who are questioning their identity and who feel ostracized in some way (CP 4). Mahesh Dattani frequently takes his subjects as the complicated dynamics of the modern urban family. His characters struggle for some kind of freedom and happiness under the weight of tradition, cultural constructions of gender and repressed desire. The most important aspect of Dattani's plays is that they address the "invisible issues" of contemporary Indian society. The second aspect of Dattani's plays is that they dive deep into human heart and create characters true to life situations.

Dattani brings out several contemporary major issues in his plays: *Tara*, *Dance like a man*, *Final solutions*, and *Seven Steps around the Fire*. In *Seven Steps around the Fire*, Dattani portrays the Eunuchs in all the ways they suffer and questions why they are not considered as humans. Eunuchs are socially and culturally marginalized and ostracized. Dattani states the sufferings of Eunuchs, Munusamy, constable calls throughout the play Anarkali as IT in neutral gender. Though they have all the feelings like other genders, the society is not ready to accept them as human being. But Dattani in the play depicts that each one of the societies treats transgender equal to beggars. They don't have own houses, and beg for food but our government fails to provide them with basic needs.

Whereas in the great epic Ramayana, when Rama was about to bring Sita back from Sri Lanka, men and women followed him out of love and devotion but Rama says "no man and woman should follow me" (CP 239) out of love the followers of Rama became transgender. Then they were blessed by Lord Rama due to transgender' love for him. On those days, they were recognized as equal to the true followers of Rama which is exactly contrary to the contemporary life. The society should provide them with equal rights, opportunities and positions.

In Indian culture transgender are invited for many auspicious events to bless the celebrities through which they receive money from the family. If the celebrities do not give them any money the transgender might curse them. May be because of these activities the society refuses to accept them without understanding why they do this and what their life style is. First of all, their family should take care of them but they deny equal rights so transgender come out of home. The family feels the behaviour of their own children alienated from the heterosexual society and therefore reject to consider them as their offspring and treat them as a burden for them. The purpose of the case study is to show their position in the society.

The play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* has a very strong exposition and we come across Uma Rao, a teacher from Bangalore University, who is the wife of the jail Superintendent, the daughter-in-law of the Deputy Commissioner and daughter of a Vice-Chancellor. She belongs to reputed section of the society and she is writing the thesis on class-gender based power implications. She is the model for those women who wish to establish their individual identity in the male dominated society. Instead of any conventional cases of domestic violence and dowry deaths, she is interested in Hijra(Kamala)murder case for which one of the Hijra of the community, Anarkali, has been arrested. The police had no proof against Anarkali but as Suresh puts it, “we only arrested her because there was no one else. There is no real proof against her. It could be any one of them” (CP 33). There are no separate prisons for Hijras and she is put in a male cell.

The play reveals the chain of injustices that a Hijra has to encounter in the society that has inborn bias against them. Anarkali is physically, mentally, verbally and sexually abused in the lockup but nobody bothers about her. She herself is fed up with the false information to meet Uma at first as she mistakes her for a journalist. But Uma is able to win her confidence and assures her of her release. She is the mouthpiece of the playwright and Dattani has projected an image of modern Indian woman through her who fights against the traditional useless values and questions the patriarchal system.

In the play Anarkali is imprisoned for which she did not commit any crime and there is no one to bail her even from her own social group. Champa is the head of all transgender in the market area, though she receives all the income from Anarkali, the head of Hijra is not ready to bail Anarkali out. So, there is no proper responsible means for the transgender to take care of them. They long for love and money. Dattani attempts how far the transgender are socially and psychologically affected individuals. Our society fails to provide and take care of the transgender in order to mingle with other genders of the society. The powerful always exploit the weak.

The transgender is not given any respect in the society. They have no right to be loved. If they tried to do so their fate will be like Kamala. Not even they who try to give love to them have to suffer like Subbu in the play. When the minister came to know about the marriage of his son, Subbu with a transgender called Kamala, the minister burned Kamala to death, in order to hide the secret marriage of his son from the society. From this issue Dattani reveals that if wealthy men commit any crime, they will go to the extreme of killing the rival or the enemy.

For which Government officials, police also help them to escape from the criminal activities. So, this paper aims to tell that vice is punished and virtue is rewarded.

Man will never accept his impotence, rather he will blame his wife as Suresh denies to going to hospital, because he thinks that he is barren, if he goes to hospital, it will be revealed. It is a domestic problem between Suresh Rao and Uma Rao. So Dattani attempts in his *Seven Steps around the Fire* many issues like plight of transgender in the society, man's inability to accept his weakness. The powerful section of the society exploits the weak, police as puppets in the hand of powerful people. So Dattani tries to realise the plights of transgender and accept them as one among the genders of us and emancipate them from the socio gender bias.

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